



WHITE SISTERS

# africa

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# mombasa



**MOMBASA, on the east coast of Africa, 260 miles south of the equator, was for centuries "THE CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD."**

APPROACHED FROM THE SEA, Mombasa, the Coral Island, is like a vision in a dream. The turquoise blue of the foam-fringed waves and the ultramarine blue of the sky serve as backdrop for the undulating palms of the giant coconut trees. This almost unreal beauty gives rise to the title, "Isle of the Blest."

Yet, there was a time when Mombasa was called *Mvita*: Place of Battles, Tavern of the Seas, Island of War. The island was the scene of bloody struggles, of atrocious revenge, of murders, of treason.

Admirably situated near the coast, Mombasa has

been in the path of the junks and merchant fleets that have furrowed the Indian Ocean for thousands of years. It has been visited in turn by navigators from Assyria, Phoenicia, Chaldea, Egypt, Persia, Greece, China, India and Arabia. Portuguese also dropped anchor at the Coral Island and, for a time, brought it the Christian faith.

More than 2,000 years ago the island was already an important cosmopolitan port handling ivory, palm oil, leopard skins, rhinoceros horns . . . and, from the time of the ancient Egyptians, African slaves.

## *gate of light, continued*

In 900, the Arabs took possession of Mombasa, Malindi and Kilwa. Records from 1154 tell us that at that period Mombasa had become a flourishing slave market and that grain was imported "to ameliorate the usual diet of fish and bananas."

An Arab "tourist" from the north of Africa described Mombasa in 1324 as "a large city where bananas, oranges and lemons abound, and whose inhabitants are honest and religious."

Sixty miles north of the city stand the imposing, mysterious ruins of Gedi: a well, six miles long, encircles the remains of a palace, a temple and two large tombs.

Persian ruins? Ancient Arab city? The remains of Gedi are still unidentified. These remnants, and other temple and cemetery ruins unearthed by archaeologists, hint of ancient civilizations in the area of Mombasa.

Historically nearer our times is Fort Jesus, which dates back to the years from 1528 to 1729 when the Portuguese established their businesses along the East African coast.

Conquered and reconquered several times during bloody struggles between the Portuguese and the Arabs, Fort Jesus finally fell to the latter. In 1810, Mombasa became a British colony. Today, the old fort —of massive architecture proper to the era of Portuguese colonizing—is a peaceful Museum of History and Archaeology, an eloquent witness of the dramatic epoch when the island was called "Place of Battles."

Crossroads of the world for thousands of years, Mombasa is still a crossroads where languages, cultures, customs and religious rub elbows without mixing, but also without clashing.

The symbol, *Gate of Light*, on Mombasa's coat-of-arms, is a mark of its destiny and its natural vocation to be a luminous CENTER OF HOSPITALITY. Such is Mombasa. . . .

. . . and such, on a small scale, is "Star of the Sea," the large school founded by the White Sisters in 1907 for the education of young Asiatic girls . . . Parsee, Arab, Goan, Indian, Hindu, Seychellois, Chinese . . . whose families have settled in Mombasa.

"Give them a tower to build together and they will become brothers." (St. Exupery)

This is precisely the role of the White Sisters in

their school: creating, among children so diverse, the bonds of mutual understanding and of friendship.

While safeguarding the personality of each student, the characteristics and cultures particular to each people, the Sisters attempt to integrate each one into the great "human community," and to develop in all the virtues and qualities common to all races: a sense of honor, of duty and of hospitality.

Because many of the pupils of "Star of the Sea" are non-Catholic, religious instruction as such is not given to them. Christ comes to them, without words, through the Sister . . . through her teaching, through her very life as a Religious, impregnated with His Spirit and His charity.

The school of the White Sisters at Mombasa, with its divisions of nursery, primary, secondary and commercial classes, groups an average of 930 pupils into 25 classes. Under the direction of the Sisters and the 29 lay teachers, the students participate in youth movements, Girl Guides, library work, the publishing of a periodical, sports, orchestra, singing, the popular dramatic performances, ordinary school work and, for the Catholic students, apostolic action.

The African population of the island has not been neglected by the White Sisters. They visit regularly the African women of the Kenya Police Quarter, the African civil hospital and a tuberculosis sanatorium, and give sewing lessons at the Catholic mission.

For the past few years, they have taken over direction of the African school founded by the Holy Ghost Fathers at Tudor, at the extreme west point of the island.

MOMBASA, enveloped by the sun, is indeed the *Gate of Light*, entranceway to a continent.

For the Missionary Sister living there, as for one who merely passes through on her way to the distant regions of the interior, Mombasa is a cosmopolitan and clamorous city with many souls who do not know the true God. For this multi-hued mass of beings filling the streets of Mombasa she raises a suppliant prayer:

"Lord, bestow on these many souls who ignore Thee, the divine light of the Faith, so that they may know and may follow Thee, the LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

SR. JACQUES DE COMPOSTELLE, W.S.





# Mombasa

*a bird's eye view*

**When I was small I used to think how pleasant it would be to live on a coral island, strolling along palm-fringed shores amid golden tropical sunshine. I would be a lone castaway. Now I have my coral island. The palm trees are there all right; so is the sunshine, plenty of it; so also is a busy modern town complete with a railway terminus and a harbor large enough to admit ocean liners. I am not alone. There are thousands of people on the island.**



## *a bird's eye view*



IN SIZE, Mombasa would suit a Robinson Crusoe very well. It is just over three miles long and about 2½ miles in width at its widest part. A few decades ago it was mainly bush. Now stylish blocks of apartments and offices look down on dual-carriage-way shopping streets. Housewives and workers of many nations hurry about their errands while tourists roam along the streets taking photographs and buying carved wooden curios from African craftsmen. It is a town of contrasts; behind the concrete-fronted, neon-lighted commercial buildings are iron-roofed shanties, with goats tethered outside, skinny chickens running in and out, and African toddlers playing hide-and-seek among the pots and pans as their mothers pound the grain for the evening meal. There are dark little shops where Indian cobblers sit cross-legged at work on the floor, or gaily checked cotton is sold for loin cloths and fine silks or georgette for saris.

There are residential areas on the fringe of the town: large houses with large gardens for the wealthy, for Europeans and Asians for the professional classes and prosperous businessmen; smaller houses for ordinary folk, the clerks and shopkeepers; neat little bungalows and flats set up by the municipality for African laborers, and gradually replacing the mud and iron shanties.

From December until March is the Dhow season, when Arab sailing vessels from India, Arabia and the Persian Gulf come into the Old Port bringing their

wares from the east: carpets and shawls from Persia, pink salt from Aden, tiles from Mangalore, dates from Iraq and the less romantic but necessary dried fish. The sailors are wild-looking men in long Arab robes and turbans, each with a knife at his belt. They meet together in little eating houses where maize is roasted over charcoal fires and mysterious spicy dishes are fried in oil, in full view of passers-by. They are all Moslems and are often to be seen fingering the "tasbih," the string of ninety-nine beads on which are recited the names of Allah. You see them at street corners, buying coffee from the Washiri vendors who go about clinking their tiny cups to attract customers, their tall brass coffee-pots gleaming in the sun. The Washiri are Arabs of a special type, from the Arabian town of Shiri. They are renowned for the skill with the knife and are in demand as night watchmen in the town. Burglars always prefer buildings where there are no Washiri.

Around the old harbor coolies unload the dhows and the goods are taken to the customs sheds and into the shops in the narrow streets of high Portuguese houses. Nearby is Fort Jesus, built by the Portuguese in 1593, a massive building with a dramatic history, often changing hands in the past, amid treachery and bloodshed, as the Portuguese and Arabs strove with each other for the conquest of the coast. In modern times the fort has been used as a prison but is to be opened to the public as a museum.

From Fort Jesus a road runs to the center of the

# Mombasa

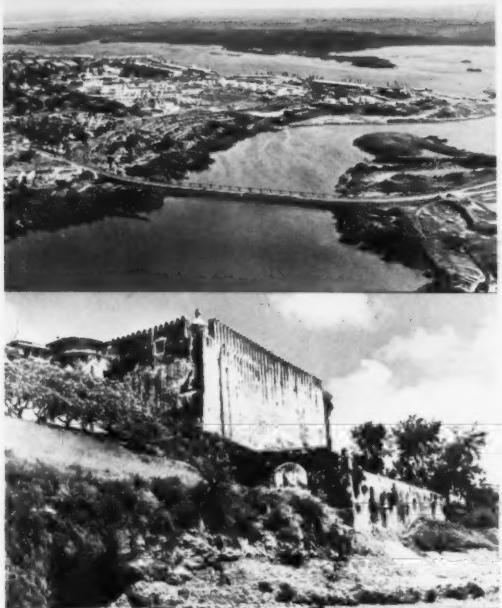


Photo British Information Service

town, marked by a monument to King George V. Here stands the dignified Cathedral of the Holy Ghost which serves a large parish of Africans, Asians and Europeans. The road continues, as Kilindini Road, past the fine double-archway of giant elephant tusks which was erected in honor of Princess Margaret's visit in 1956. The tusks were originally meant to be a temporary affair but, so popular were they, they have been kept permanently to remind visitors that Mombasa is the Gateway to East Africa. At Kilindini is the modern harbor which is always busy and ever increasing in size as new berths are constructed and the approaches deepened.

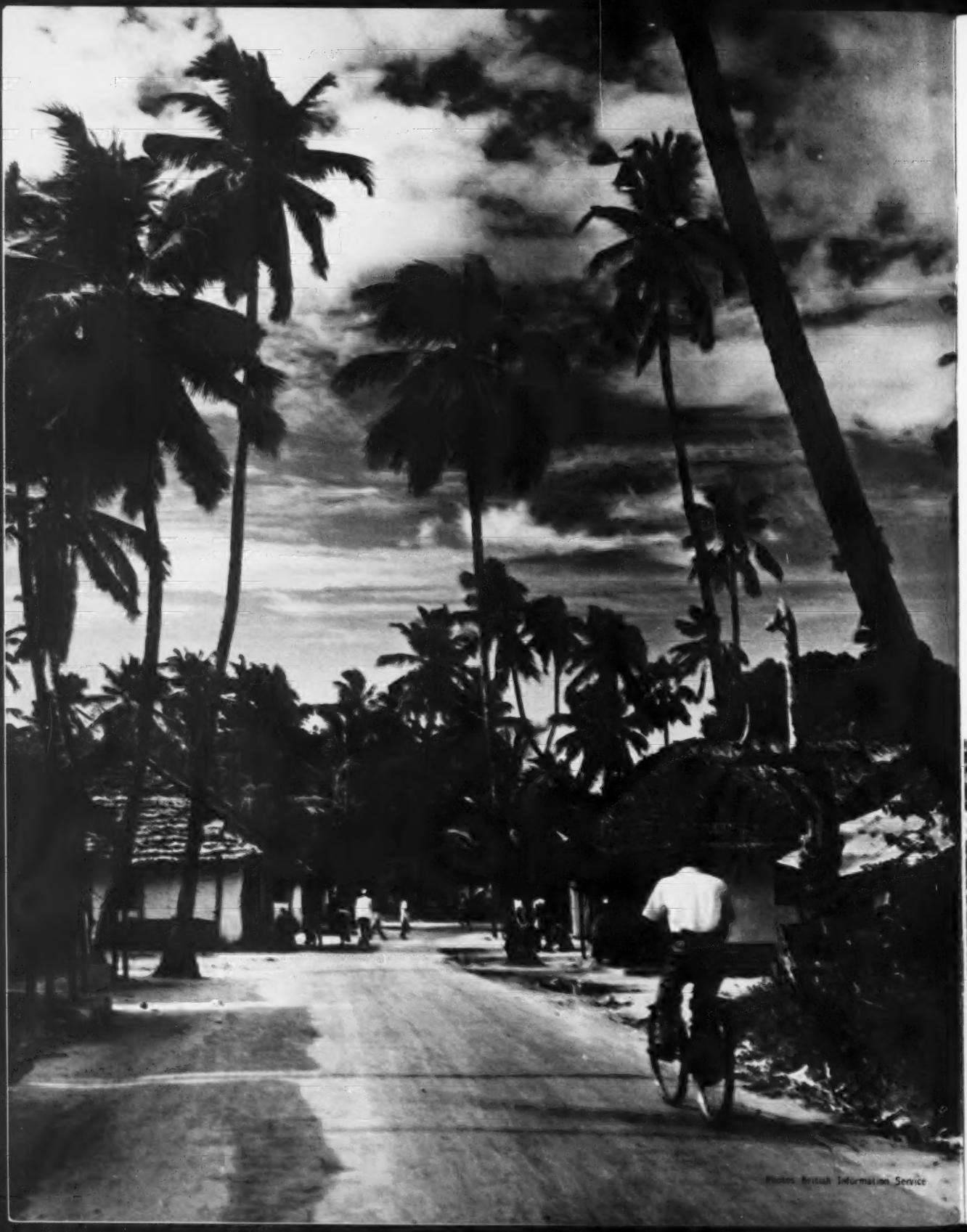
A mile or two further North is Makupa, a largely African area, with its Holy Ghost Mission; a large Catholic Primary and Intermediate School run by the Holy Ghost Fathers, and a small convent of African Sisters. In Majengo, a district of warehouses, factories, railway yards and poor African homes, live the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld. They have the Blessed Sacrament in their Fraternity Chapel, and in that neighborhood, Our Lord is truly living in the midst of Moslem and pagan people. The Sisters of Loreto have also a Convent in Mombasa, teaching European girls and small boys. The White Sisters have the "Star of the Sea" school for Asians . . . a school that has grown phenomenally from small beginnings. There are now over nine hundred pupils, and more would come if only there were enough classrooms, and enough teachers. The Sisters also have

charge of a smaller school for Africans at Tudor, an African residential area on the western side of the island.

Mombasa island is linked to the mainland by Makupa Causeway, over which passes the main road to Nairobi and the Kenya-Uganda Railway, which links the town and its port with Nairobi, Kisumu, Kampala and even the copper-mining district of Ruwenzori. A new causeway is also under construction. On the other side of the island is Nyali Bridge, which enjoys the distinction of being the second largest floating bridge in the world!!!—so they say. There are ferries as well, the chief one, at Likoni, being operated by motor-driven pontoons, the newest and largest of which can carry a dozen cars with ease, quite an achievement for Africa.

Another feature of interest is the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education—a magnificent cluster of buildings in Arab style—looking for all the world like some city from the "Arabian Nights." It is open to Muslim boys who wish to train as engineers or in other professions requiring technical education. There are many mosques on the island, and Hindu temples, one of which boasts of being the tallest building in town. Such is the island of Mombasa with its contrasts between old and new, its surges of rapid development and its cosmopolitan interests, and Christianity is fighting to develop there amid Mohammedanism and pagan beliefs.

Sr. M. CHRISTOPHER, W.S.



Photos: British Information Service

# Mombasa

## *the coral island*

A F R I C A . . . ? The tourist aboard a Union Castle Line steamer asks himself as the vessel majestically glides past Fort Jesus, the Light House, and an old wreck of a foundered ship, then turns the bend at M'baraki with its western civilization and velvety green golf links!!! On the opposite side lies the coast of the African mainland gently lapped by the white-crested waves of the azure blue of the Indian Ocean, and fringed by a host of graceful coconut palms that seem to wave their welcome to the newcomer entering the harbor of Mombasa.

Tucked away among the slender palms, neat white bungalows with red tiled roofs, give signs of western civilization, while the little ebony black youngster, having his daily swim, and a few negro fishermen hauling ashore their night's catch, bring you back to reality. Yes, Mombasa is, first and foremost, the LAND OF THE AFRICAN with an historic past both ancient and dramatic, that few lands can boast of.

### The Land of Many Peoples

The total population is estimated at more than 110,906 made up approximately of 69,000 Africans, 26,306 Asians of various races and denominations, 13,375 Arabs and 2,225 Europeans.

Once cleared through the hustle and bustle of the customs, the tourist is relieved at being accosted by a taxi driver.

"Manor Hotel, Miss? . . . Palm Court Hotel . . . Carlton Hotel . . ." a whole string of names follows for your choice of the "most up-to-date" hotel. As the taxi drives you down Kilindini Road, which leads to the center of the town, you wonder whether you are not back in Europe. Large shops with the most attractive windows line the streets, side by side with hotels, banks, houses and flats with several stories. Picturesque dividing islands, gay with tropical flowers, make the main road fit to compete with any in London. For a moment a sense of disappointment steals over the visitor.





"I never expected this in Africa," you confess to the driver.

"Oh, this is not real Mombasa, Miss. This is all for white people and rich Indians. Real Mombasa is further down. Want to see Miss?", and the prospect of a few more shillings increases his eagerness to show you the real Mombasa.

Yes, Old Mombasa is the real Mombasa; the island that Vasco da Gama set foot on, on his way to India. The spot where St. Francis Xavier landed and said

Mass on his way to India, where people from the ancient civilized world came; the place where bloody battles were fought, where secret underground tunnels are still to be found. This is the Mombasa known to the African, the Indian merchant, and even to the European settler who is obliged to penetrate into the very heart of the island, if not for any other reason, but for that of economical shopping.

What strikes you first is perhaps the variety of complexions and costumes that you encounter. Is it





your child's book of "People from other lands" come to life??? Curiosity gets the better of you, and despite your western reserve, you accost a passer-by, a young woman gracefully dressed in yards of beautiful light material, tastefully draped round the waist down to the ankles, and over the head.

"Why are there so many people from foreign lands here today?" Miss Ignoramus asks . . . ?

"We are always here, not only today. This is the adopted land of many races of people."

"But what do you all do here?"

"A variety of things. Traders, merchants, professionals, business men—all find a place in Mombasa. And what's more, there is a friendly co-operation between the different nationalities. Among my friends are Indians of various denominations and races, Goans, Seychellois, Arabs, Chinese, Africans, Parsees and Europeans. Would you give me the pleasure of dining with me tomorrow??? It will give you a chance to meet some of my friends."

Sr. CECILIA MARY, W.S.



*from  
down  
the ages*

# the dhow





WHAT A VISTA of ancient stories, tales of gallantry and cruelty, of cold-blooded massacres, of trade in slavery, dating as far back as a thousand years before Christ, all veiled in somber oriental mystery, does the word "DHOW" not conjure up to an inhabitant resident in the vicinity of the old harbor at Mombasa. To a casual visitor the Dhow means nothing more than an old sailing-ship replaced by our twentieth century liner.

The "DHOW" dates back to the time of the Sumerians who lived about seven thousand years ago in the country now called Iraq, in the neighborhood of the Persian Gulf. Here, it is believed, the earliest civilization in the world grew up. The Sumerians were the first to invent the first kind of sailing ships and to make voyages on the open sea. It was in these sailing-ships that the Summerians, Assyrians, Indians and the ancient Egyptians, who improved on the original model, the Jews and the Phoenicians from the east coast of the Mediterranean, came to the east coast of Africa.

The Phoenicians were neighbors of the Jews and in the time of King Solomon we read in the Bible about an alliance between them and King Heram of Phoe-

nicia. The two Kings sent ships down the east coast of Africa and obtained gold, silver, ivory, apes and parrots. The date of this journey was approximately one thousand years before Christ. Last, but not least, came the Arabs, the most important of all the visitors. For at least three thousand years the history of East Africa, and especially Mombasa, has been closely linked up with that of Arabia.

The Arabs, as early as three thousand years ago, had discovered that by making use of the north-east and south-west monsoon winds, they could carry on a most valuable commerce with the east coast of Africa. It became the custom to send, every year, a large fleet of dhows to trade along the whole of the east African coast. At various places, especially on the little islands such as Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Pemba, lying just off the shore, they built themselves proper trading settlements. These dhows, which to this day visit the shores of East Africa and in particular Mombasa, the most important port, are an interesting link with ancient times.

Apart from slaves, the merchandise is still what it was three thousand years ago.



## the dhow season

EARLY IN FEBRUARY, strains of Arab chanting accompanied by a chorus of clapping on a varied rhythm wafted over the sea by the north-east monsoon or Trade Winds, announce the arrival of the first "DHOW" of the season. In the far distance appears a white speck which gradually takes the shape of a huge white sail.

The Dhow is completely at the mercy of the monsoon winds. Day by day, the numbers increase till the harbor begins to have the appearance of a floating village. Daily chores are carried out on deck, by the side of the vessel in the sea where the washing is done in small boats. Friendly calls from one dhow to another echo and re-echo over the water. Yes, the dhow Arab has no need of wireless or Morse signalling to hold a conversation with his friends at a distance of several yards. The day is spent in unloading the merchandise; dates, spices, salted fish, Persian carpets, fans, etc. Towards 6 P.M. as the sun, a veritable ball of fire, begins to sink in the horizon; clear and impressive, rings the "Muezzin," the Mohammedan call to prayer.

After sunset, in the fast approaching darkness, peculiar to the African climate, oil lamps begin to appear. In the space of an hour or so the floating village is a silhouette of masts, with a faint flicker of light

visible from every dhow, domed by the starry sky in the pitch darkness of an African night. Here and there a flame may be visible where the evening meal is being cooked. The soft murmur of voices pervades the air which gradually dies down to a mysterious stillness; the c-r-a-c-k of the huge masts, swayed to and fro by the evening breeze, make the stillness all the more conspicuous.

But this calm and quiet is not that of dreamland as you would presume. No! the Arab is a born wanderer. He is now out on his nocturnal wanderings in the old town of Mombasa.

The night is now far spent; the darkness deeper; the stillness has gradually descended upon the houses in the surroundings. Faintly, from a distance, comes the sound of rhythmic clapping often unaccompanied by any other music; at times, by the plaintive oriental melodies. The sound crescendos and decrescendos as the sea breeze rises or falls, the waves lending their share of accompaniment. And the sleeper in his bed is loath to close his eyes again for he is captivated by this enchanting music, seeming almost to come from a world other than his own.

THE WHITE SISTERS strive to give their children a solid education, not only from the academic point of view, but also to prepare them to be good citizens

# aboard an arab dhow

of a cosmopolitan town like Mombasa. Every opportunity is availed of to make the children tolerant and appreciative of the habits, customs, religion and traditions of the various nationalities.

As Freya's uncle is the Commander of an Arab Dhow, a visit is arranged for the top class of the "STAR OF THE SEA" school, and great is the excitement of the twenty eager seniors of various nationalities — Indian, Arab, Goan, Seychellois and Parsee — as the school bus drives through the old town, past Fort Jesus, down Vasco Da Gama Street facing the shore, where the latter landed and finally arrives at the Old Port, now used exclusively for Dhows. Freya's Father—the Liwali—(Arab Chief) meets us at the gate.

After the introductory greetings, we take our seats on Persian carpets in an eighteen-oar embarkation boat. Clapping, singing and dancing entertain us while we feel a little uneasy as to the fate of the abandoned oars. We eventually reach the dhow and climb up by means of a rope ladder. Once again, Persian carpets invite us to take a seat on the floor. Oriental fashion we squat while the commander and some of the crew relate their exciting sea adventures.

A servant, with a beautifully engraved metal tray appears, on which is the most dainty looking coffee set. Round the brass coffeepot are arranged miniature porcelain bowls each standing in a little carved metal stand of the most delicate workmanship. Black steaming coffee with plenty of sugar is served in these bowls. It is the coffee grown in the very soil of Arabia. Dates, almond sweet and nuts are also served. Incense is burnt, and our handkerchiefs are scented with strong oriental perfume.

We begin our tour at the stern. The compass and rudder are just below the watch tower. Vainly we look for cabins. Instead, we are shown a range of lockers in the wall where personal belongings are kept under lock and key of some thirty members of the crew. One must remember that these dhows are seldom, if ever, used as passenger ships, and therefore, no accommodation is necessary for women and children.

We descend by a little rickety staircase to the store room. Like all else on the dhow, the provisions are

meagre and barely sufficient according to our standards. Dates and corn meal are about all in the line of food. A thousand gallons of drinkable water have to suffice, for the two thousand mile sea voyage. A goat provides fresh milk for the crew.

In the hold is a little kitchen with a shed for animals. And here ends our tour. Here where once human cargo was carried. If only the hold could speak what a tale it would tell!!!

The voyage from Mombasa to Arabia takes twenty days; thirty to the Persian Gulf and from thence to India, another twenty days. During the last war, Indian dhows took passengers when steamers were in demand for the Navy. Some sort of accommodation was provided for women and children, but many were the stories of exciting adventures that befell these daring passengers. For, two months or more on the sea in an open vessel with no other guide than the captain's sense of direction and completely at the mercy of the wind and the inclemencies of the weather, demands some courage or perhaps . . . faith.

The dhows vary in size according to the purpose for which they are destined. The largest—which sail the ocean—are made of teak and varnished with fish oil. They carry dates, salt, salted fish, Persian carpets, Manglorian tiles and woolen shawls. They export corn, coffee, sugar, coal and logs of wood of the mango tree. Their tonnage does not exceed two hundred.

The dhows that sail only along the coast are smaller. Formerly they were made of mango wood sewn with coconut fibre, lest nails should cause them to be attracted by the magnet mountains which the dhows passed on their voyage. They carry some fifty tons less than the large ones.

All good things come to an end . . . We are back on the deck where we take our farewells—oriental fashion with much bowing and kissing of hands. We set foot on solid ground again, and for a moment feel in a new world. Dates, goats, Persian carpets, black coffee, ghastly figures of ill-used slaves, the dignified look of the captain, daggers and oriental perfume provide raw material for some exciting dreams from which you are awakened by the gripping strains of clapping and Arabic chant.

S.R. CECILIA MARY, W.S.

# A POSTCARD

Mombasa



MOMBASA — EAST AFRICA



Nyali Bridge, Mombasa

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S. SKULINA AND D. FRANK



FORT JESUS



MOMBASA — INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

# WHITE SISTERS

# Mombasa Mombasa



# SMELTING POT

## mombasa mombasa

*Eyebrows might be raised*

*by the bold statement that the*

*White Sisters in*

*Mombasa work*

*at a "smelting pot."*

*(continued next page)*



WHITE SISTERS

# *White Sisters' Smelting Pot*

THOSE WHO KNOW little of Mombasa and its peoples might think the statement fantastic. To those who know this cosmopolitan island of many tribes, creeds and colors, the thought is not so farfetched.

To see the "smelter" at work, let us look into the White Sisters' school in Mombasa. In the classrooms we see the raw material of her art, the varied representatives of a new generation of Mombasan citizens. These are the hope of the future.

Through the hands of the Sisters-in-charge flows the hot, vital liquid of the thoughts and hopes and ideals of these young students. She, like the smelter, must separate good from impure traits and refine the virtues that ennoble.

The White Sister has before her an olive-skinned, brown-eyed Indian of Hindu religion and beliefs. Next to her may be seated a Parsee—alike in features and indistinguishable to the visitor, but with an en-



tirely different culture, belief and language. Close behind may be a little Chinese classmate, lighter in coloring, whose parents are deeply steeped in Buddhism and whose native land can boast of a thousand epochs of history.

To her left may be seen the young African, dark round eyes full of hope and wonder, not far removed in time from a heritage of primitive folklore.

The eyes of the White Sister can wander around the room and rest in turn on the Anglo-Indian, the Seychellois, the Goan, the Arab, each with her own special culture, creed and mode of life.

Outside among the swirling masses of Mombasa's citizens are all types of dress. Many styles of architecture line its streets: mosque, miniature skyscraper, pagoda-like temple.

It may well be that the Sister's little charges return home at night to be enveloped once more in the mystic practices of the East.

And what is the White Sister's task? It is certainly not to Westernize her students. It is not to make a "cast" of them that will be a set type, a mass with the same characteristics, the same uniform, the same ideals, the same ambitions.

The silversmith works with one metal but he produces many different objects of art—a vase, a platter, a ring, a crown, a chalice!

The Sister has one material—the human personality—from which to fashion the future teacher, typist, artist, nurse, mother. From this school in Mombasa will go the successful candidates for the universities of Europe, to return richer in ideals, stronger in convictions, nobler in thought, more competent and capable of passing on to her sister Mombasans the benefits of her experiences.

While the White Sister is setting her charges on the road to social success and happiness, it is her task also to teach them the dignity of womanhood, the destiny of all creatures to reign eternally with God.

To live among the peoples of this island is soon to realize that fundamentally they are all searching for the noble, that they have deep in their beings the consciousness of the immortal, whatever their creed or denomination. Though the White Sister does not teach religion to those of her students who are not of the Faith, she prays that little by little they will come to want more than their demigods or half-truths can give them.

It is out of this smelting pot that the Sister draws what is finest and noblest in womankind. She builds it up, she polishes it like the gentle silversmith until some day, in God's own time, the image of Himself will shine therein.

Sr. MORONETA, W. S.





MOSLEM PUNJABI



SEYCHELLOIS

# Mombasa . . . some of

INDIAN CATHOLIC



ARAB





HINDU



PARSEE



MOSLEM BALUCHI

# its people beliefs . . .

WABONI



GOAN CATHOLIC



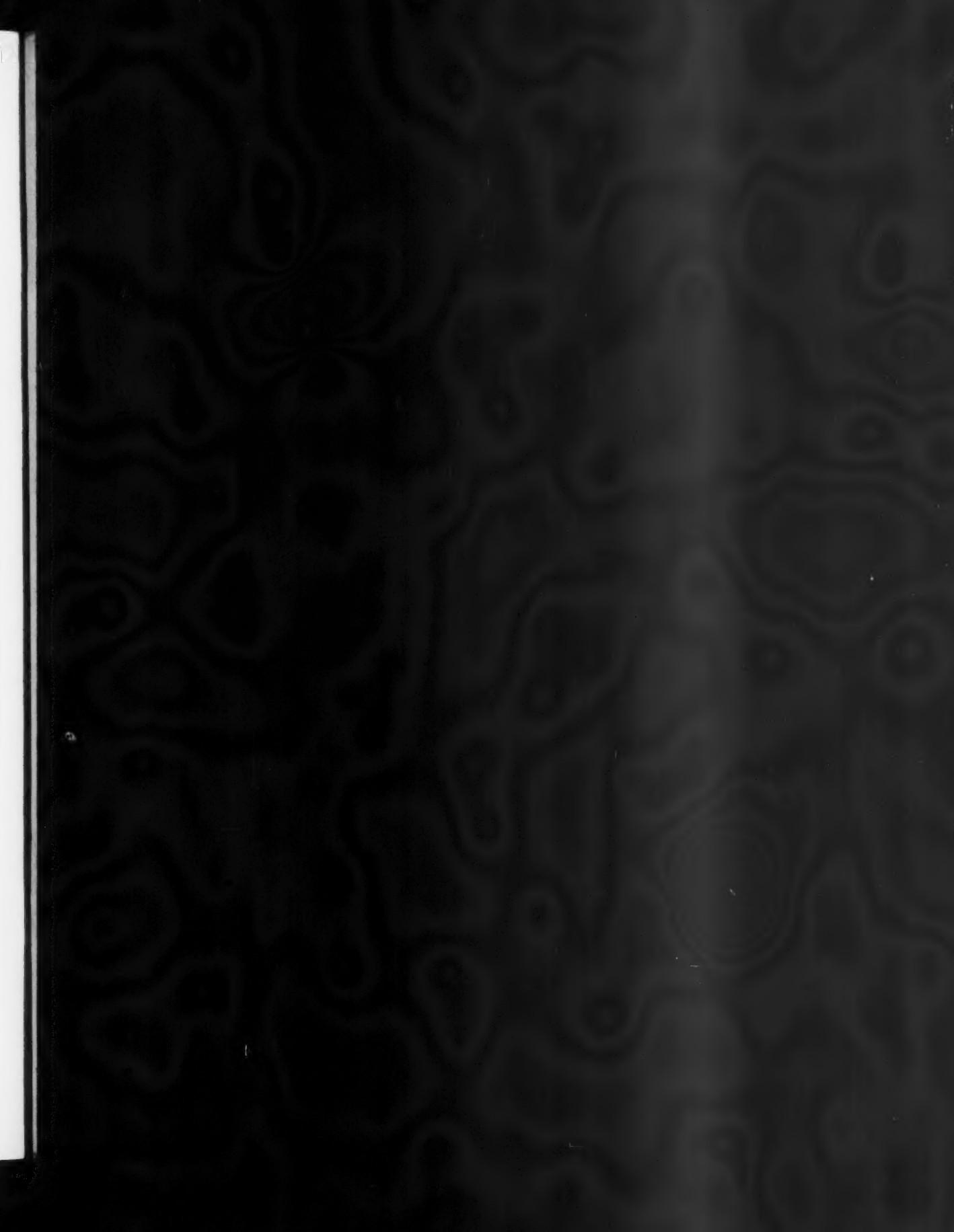
# mombasa PARSEES



THE PARSEES ARE PERSIANS in origin. They are distinguished from the Persians by the new name since the time of the Mohammedan invasion in the seventh century when Persia succumbed under the new power. Rather than accept the new religion, a number of Persians sacrificed home and land and all else dear to them to remain faithful to their ancient religion taught by Zoroaster who was "one of the many religious teachers of the Gentiles, not Prophets inspired by God, but men working toward truth all the same and by and large serving truth—at least to the point of bettering the proportion of truth to error. Around five hundred years before Christ when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, there were a series of religious movements throughout the Pagan world; Zoroaster in Persia got closer to monotheism perhaps than any religious founder ever got outside the main stream of God's revelation to man; in different ways Gautama Buddha in India, Confucius and Lao Tse in China founded systems based upon great truths from which, though they were mingled with error or hindered by insufficiency, men's souls surely gained far more than they lost." (THEOLOGY AND SANITY . . . by F.J. Sheed)

The Parsee religion was practised by the great Kings Darius and Cyrus of whom we hear in the Bible; the religion of which the Magi were priests and who were the first of the Gentiles to adore the Messias. Indeed, the Parsee has every right to his racial pride. He is still a Zoroastrian faithfully guarding the beliefs of his ancestors and the high morality, taught by Zoroaster, which satisfies his innate love for good. Only the priceless gift of Faith will ever lead him to abandon his belief for something higher which no human reasoning will convince him of.

The Parsees have been faithful to all that human





reason can teach them about religion. Will the Sovereign Love who watches over all, not deign to enlighten them further? Will the star that guided the Wise Men to the feet of the Divine Infant not lead many more of their ancient faith to utter the self-same words "for we have seen His Star in the east, AND ARE COME TO ADORE HIM?"

Zoroaster was born in Media towards 660 B.C. and died around 583. His mission was to spread the revelations he had received from Ahura Mazda (GOD). His apostolate is related in the "gathas," a certain form of long prayers, which express the continual conflict between the powers of darkness and the God of Light. Zoroaster's preaching also influenced Buddhism in India. Mazdeism is another name given to this religion and is still the religion of the Parsees. So much so, that the word "Parsee" has, through custom come to be used as a synonym for "Zoroastrian" and people are led to confuse the race with the religion. Since 1949, however there exists in Bombay, a Parsee Catholic Association under a Parsee convert, dedicated to the labor of evangelizing their brother Parsees, who in so many ways, are so close to the spirit of Christ. (Fides).

From their founder, the Zoroastrians have received the belief of the Principle of Good (Ahura Mazda or Ormuzd) and the Principle of Evil (Aheriman). Ormuzd must be worshipped and Aheriman abhorred and followers of Zoroaster must arrive at purity of soul and body. Just as the creation by Ormuzd was spoilt by the intervention of Aheriman so in nature and in man are to be found a good and bad element. Following the example given by Ormuzd, man must fight for good against evil. He must be an enemy of falsehood and wrong, and avowed to the service of truth and goodness.

It is a religion based on the ceaseless conflict between good and evil. Zoroaster believed in the ultimate triumph of Ormuzd over Aheriman. All the contrasts in nature are modes of this universal warfare—light and darkness—life and death, health and sickness, truth and falsehood. The moral code which follows from this creed is put in the summary: "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds."

In this religion, work, family, respect of wife and child are linked with high morals which forbid divorce and polygamy. After death the good are expected to go to "Garodeman" (the home of songs)

where Ormuzd lives and is glorified by the faithful, and the bad are condemned to "Drudjodeman" (hell—the home of falsehood.)

After much suffering and many hardships endured for the sake of preserving their religion, a number of Persians sought refuge in India, at Diu, from where they spread by boats to Sanjan, now a ruined city. This is related in a poem written by a Zoroastrian priest, Behman Kaikobad Sanjana, in 1600. Later, the Parsees moved to another spot where they were allowed to build their own temple by the Indian Rajah, but the Moslem conquest inflicted more suffering, and a great many perished in the valiant defense of their adopted country. The Parsees (name given to these religious refugees from Persia), then spread into different parts of India and above all, in Bombay where they now number some 90,000. Many have dispersed to the British Colonies and to England.

With their spirit of enterprise, unity of effort and perseverance, the Parsees, though small in number, have attained an important role in commerce and politics favorable to the English.

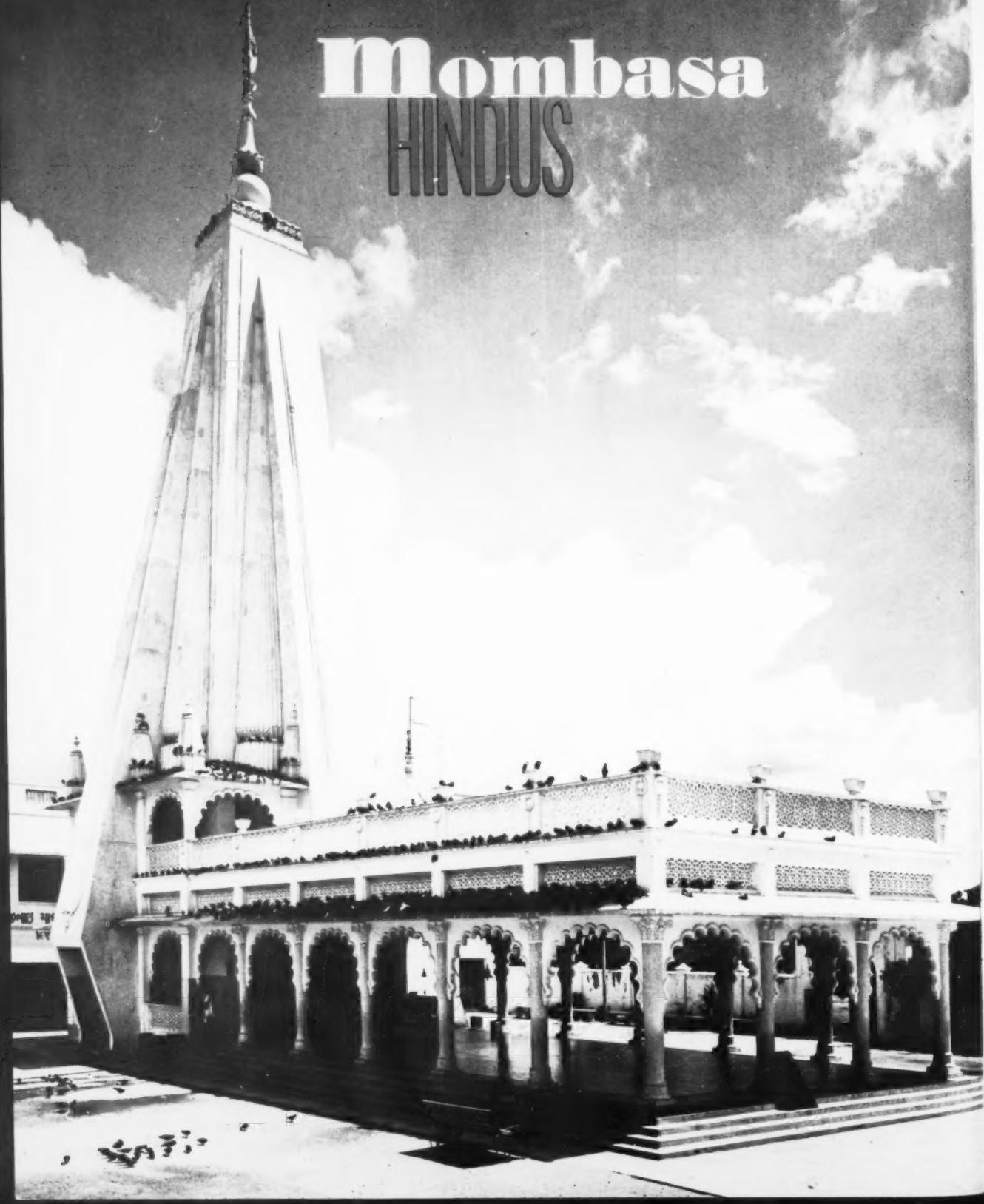
"When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" . . . (Matt. II)

WHO were these WISE MEN who came from the East to Jerusalem?

"Some would have us believe that they were priests of Zoroastrianism, a religion flourishing in Persia. Of this religion the Magi were the official leaders. They represent the successes and perfections of natural religion within its own sphere; for though their beliefs and worship were defective, they excelled all the other votaries of Gentile religions. They had been influenced by the widespread spirit of expectation that stirred the East in this last pre-Christian age . . . The noble Gentiles who were to adore the Divine Child, would have felt very strongly the universal expectation . . . They may have benefited by some divine revelation through their sincerity and their goodness . . . In common with many primitive races they were given to the study of the stars and to the interpretation of human events by reference to them . . . they saw the STAR and decided to follow it. . . ." (The King Uncrowned by Rev. M. O'Connel).

Sr. CECILIA MARY, W.S., OF PARSEE ORIGIN

# Mombasa HINDUS



## Mombasa . . . some of its people beliefs . . .

THOUGH EAST AND WEST may at times meet, it is unfortunately true that they meet as comparative strangers.

Most of us in our Western hemisphere have little opportunity to get to know the peoples of the East with their many charming and, at the same time, mystic customs. If asked, for example, what is a Hindu, we might answer, "Why, an Indian, of course," and in that one word ineffectually try to sum up thousands of years of history and the lives of millions and millions of persons.

Hindus in Mombasa are divided into numerous sects, each subdivided into castes. There is a certain vagueness about these differences. Questioned, girls at the White Sisters' school will say, "Hindus worship all the gods in Mombasa . . . There are thirty-three million gods altogether . . . No, we don't know the names of the different groups of people." Or, asked to which community she belongs, one will give her caste, another her family name, another according to

the part of India from which her family came.

One of the oldest religions in the world, Hinduism is divided into four main castes: the Brahmins or priestly caste, the Khatriyas or soldier caste, the Vaisyas or shopkeepers, the Sudras or artisans and laborers.

Though at one time one caste would not mix with another, and especially with Sudras who were looked upon as untouchable, in Mombasa there is a general mingling of castes.

Many Hindus came to East Africa to help build its railways, bridges and roads. Others came as traders, riding the path of the monsoon winds from India. Settling in Mombasa, they sent for their relatives. Some opened shops, some worked as clerks while others became teachers and doctors.

"The first member of our family to emigrate to Africa was my great-great-grandfather in 1870," relates a student at the White Sisters' Senior School, whose father is a journalist.



Photo by F. S. Petersak Studios

# Mombasa HINDUS

## marriage

Although the custom is that a man must not marry before he is twenty-five and the girl before she is sixteen, this is not strictly observed in Mombasa. Nor is the former ban against intermarriage between persons of different castes.

Listen to this description of a wedding among Hindus from Cutch (a region in the Bombay State of western India):

"When there is a wedding in our country the bridegroom sits on a horse controlled by a man walking. A procession starts at about 7 p.m. First there is a band followed by horse carts in which small children sit. Next come other little children, smartly dressed and sitting on horses. They are called the courtiers of the bridegroom. Another band follows. Next comes the bridegroom, wearing his best clothes. Then come the women who sing wedding songs and, lastly, the men. Behind the bridegroom sit any of his female relatives. The party proceeds to the house of the bride where the wedding ceremony takes place. The ceremony may last until 3 a.m. the next day — or later."



## **cow**

The cow is not worshipped but merely respected. Hindus look upon her as a mother who provides milk for them from the beginning to the end of life. A Hindu will never eat beef, out of respect for the cow. "If I did eat beef the number of cows would be greatly reduced, there would be a shortage of milk and fewer animals for work," he says. Much milk is used in preparing Hindu dishes.

## **prayer**

Hindus pray twice a day, morning and evening. They also use beads (108), made of scented wood and strung on a simple string, on which they say the name of God, "Om." Before prayer in the early morning a bath is taken as a symbol of purification. Men and women may go to the temple and pray there together. In the temples are statues of the "Lord Krishna."

"Hinduism does not claim its origin to any particular agent of God or at any particular time," a Hindu student explains. "It is not a revealed religion and as such its doctrines are not enshrined in any single

specific book or set of dogmas." Divine intervention, the Hindus believe, takes place "whenever the burden of iniquity and evil on earth becomes intolerable."

Stressed is the importance of performance of duty without attachment to its fruits. Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated in his life the principle of *Abhimsa*, or non-violence. The resistance to evil without hatred, anger or bitterness is at its core.

## **costume**

Costumes vary according to the professions of the people. Men wear a sort of loin cloth called the *dhoti*. Women wear saris made of silk or cotton. They may also wear bangles, earrings and nose-rings.

## **diwali**

Diwali is the Hindu New Year, the biggest feast. It celebrates the return of the saint Ram to the rightful possession of his throne after a fourteen-year banishment in the forest. At his return the people rejoiced and had a great feast. Hindus still feast and light their homes with candles to celebrate the event. They let off fireworks all night for three or four nights consecutively.



**Holy Ghost Cathedral, Mombasa**



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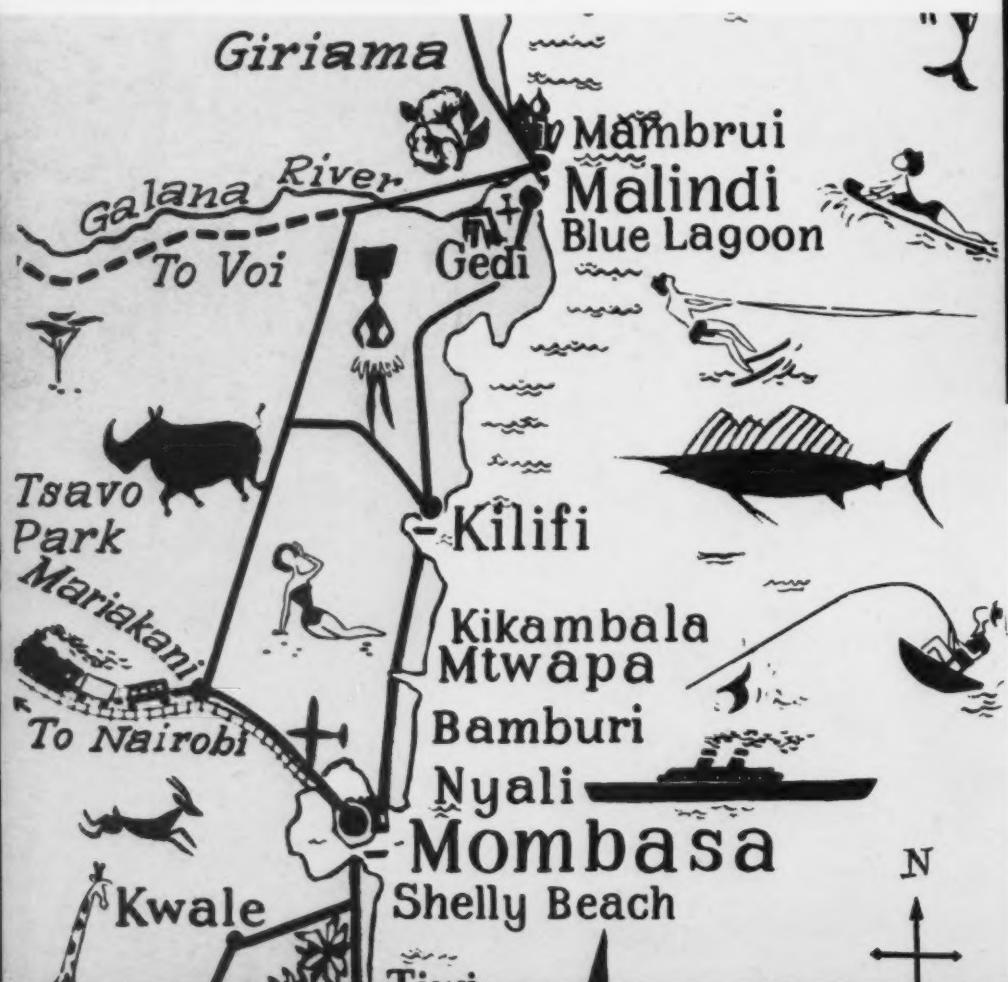


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